



Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 26, 2013

By: Kalei Rupp

Alaska Territorial Guard members to be honored in Ketchikan

CAMP DENALI, Alaska—Five Alaska Territorial Guard heroes will be honored in Ketchikan March 5 and will be given their official U.S. Army honorable discharge certificates, nearly 70 years after their admirable service in defending Alaska during World War II.

Maj. Gen. Thomas H. Katkus, adjutant general of the Alaska National Guard, and Verdie Bowen, director of the Alaska Office of Veterans Affairs, will present the Alaska Territorial Guard Service Medal and honorable discharge certificates to Henry Neligan, Craig ATG unit; Ralph Devenny, Wrangell ATG unit; Victor Klose, Ketchikan ATG unit; and brothers John and Willard Reese, both with the Ketchikan ATG unit.

Neligan is 100 years old and will celebrate his 101st birthday in May. He is the oldest living ATG veteran who will have received his honorable discharge certificate.

The Alaska Territorial Guard was formed during World War II all across the territory of Alaska to defend against foreign enemies. From 1942-1947, more than 6,400 Alaskans volunteered and answered the call to protect our land and nation. These brave men and women did not go through basic military training, but they still faithfully guarded their assigned territory with little equipment and no pay until the ATG was disbanded in 1947.

The late Sen. Ted Stevens, of Alaska, worked tirelessly to get them the recognition and benefits they earned. In 2000, service in the ATG was given federal recognition as Public Law 106-259 and under Title 38 – Veterans Benefits in the U.S. Code. This allowed our ATG veterans to receive all benefits afforded those who served on active duty. ATG members now hold veteran status and can apply for U.S Army honorable discharges.

“Unfortunately, nearly 70 years has passed since the last ATG member has served,” Bowen said. “We have come a long way since October 2000 to ensure our nation honors every serving member of the ATG. We continue to work diligently to locate all living members and surviving families to ensure we honor each individual member. We will continue this plight until all are found.”

“Furthermore, we are creating federal service records to be stored in our National Archives ensuring we bridge the gap between the generations, keeping alive the memory of all who served,” Bowen added.

For more information regarding the ATG or to apply for discharge, contact the Office of Veterans Affairs at (907)334-0874 or toll free at (888)428-3682.

Who: Maj. Gen. Thomas H. Katkus, adjutant general of the Alaska National Guard, and Verdie Bowen, director of the Alaska Office of Veterans Affairs

What: Presenting ATG honorable discharge certificates and Alaska Territorial Guard Service Medals

Where: Ketchikan Indian Community Meals and Wheels Center, 615 Stedman Street, Ketchikan, Alaska

When: Tuesday, March 5, 11 a.m. – 12 p.m.

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Media are invited to attend. We have two seats available for media on the aircraft to Ketchikan from Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in Anchorage on a first-come, first-served basis. Please contact Kalei Rupp at (907)428-6032 to secure your seat by Friday.